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"To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me" (II.i.107): The Dynamics of Teaching and Learning in *Love's Labour's Lost*

Delphine Lemonnier-Texier

1 The thematisation of teaching in *Love's Labour's Lost*, as in *The Taming of the Shrew*, can probably be seen as a direct result of Shakespeare's use of figures from the Italian comic tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*, and in particular the figure of the doctor or pedant; but it can also be traced back to a general trend, in the last quarter of the 16th century, in which schoolmasters were satirized in a number of plays[1].

2 The gendered nature of Shakespeare's treatment of the theme in both comedies – female pupil and a male teacher – hinges upon the realities of the stage and the acting profession in Elizabethan England, in which boy actors having entered apprenticeship aged 11 or 12 for a standard duration of seven years progressively moved from playing short parts in their early days as apprentices (such as pages or minor female characters) to longer, more complex parts (eg. the major female parts) demonstrating skills acquired under the guidance of a senior actor.

3 In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Petruccio teaches Kate to pretend the sun is the moon and an old man is a fresh-faced maid; in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the most scathing lesson the four women teach the four men is by outdoing their pageant. In other words, the lessons presented in the two plays are primarily lessons in the art of acting which playfully and effectively reverse the hierarchy between professional actors and their apprentices on stage, as well as the hierarchy between the sexes in the worlds of the plays.

4 In *Love's Labour's Lost*, a play "where a braggart cannot count to three nor even a king to five", as Cynthia Lewis notes[2], two types of "schools" co-exist. On the one hand, the play shows the sterile, narcissistic school of Navarre's Academe, where all the men are in love with the sound of their own voices[3], resulting in hollow if poetically effective exchanges merely echoing one another's ideas. These men's so-called knowledge is

grotesquely amplified in the figure of Armado the braggart soldier and pitiful lover, and their pathetic attempt at theatrical performance is mirrored and amplified in the pageant of the Nine Worthies put on by the satirical schoolmaster figure, Holofernes, and his acolytes.

5 Contrasting with this all-male world, the Princess of France and her ladies stand as foils for the arrogant ignorance and inflated self-esteem of the men and constitute an informal alternative "school" of sorts based on qualities that the men lack, among which self-knowledge, humility and common sense. In a world where – just as in Renaissance England – "the mutual imbrication of language and sexuality looms large[4] ", the confrontation between the two highlights the static and potentially regressive nature of the men's "learning" which, among other things, is "preposterous" – to take up Patricia Parker's enlightening analysis[5] – and causes the freezing of language in matter, while the women's lessons provide the play with a much needed dynamics reinvigorating language and opening perspectives for the possibility of comic catharsis.

The flawed academy of Navarre: the men's misuse of language and its consequences

Fame-hungry, narcissistic men: the caricature of a spiritual war

6 The opening scene of the play clearly demonstrates the flawed school, or "Academe" as he calls it, of the King of Navarre (I.i.13) both in the statutes of the edict and in the very fabric of the dialogue. The scene is saturated with the Christian vocabulary of spiritual warfare, only it is placed under a quest for fame, not virtue. Similarly, the paradoxical statement joining the contemplative and the active parts of philosophy highlights Navarre's confusion, as Rolf Soellner has shown, concluding that Ferdinand's confusion of basic philosophic terminology is symptomatic of his ignorance of the goals of both moral philosophy and Christian warfare. In seeking glory through establishing an academy of warriors of the spirit, Ferdinand violates these goals[6].

7 The poetic fabric of the dialogue is the second element that highlights the flaws of Navarre's school. He and his men are infatuated with the sound of their own voices. As they echo Navarre's principles, the musicality of their lines rapidly supersedes the assertion of moral principles. Berowne uses the same phrase at regular intervals "Which I hope well is not enrolled here" (38), "The which I hope is not enrolled here" (41), "Which I hope well is not enrolled there" (46) like some sort of refrain the affectation of which is increased by the stress on 'enrollèd' which is normally left unstressed. Halfway through his cue, identical rhymes appear ("night/night", 42, 44; "day/day", 43-45), and he concludes with a rhyming couplet (47-48). The next rhyme is shared between the King and Berowne ("these/please", 49-50), as is the rhyming couplet started by Longaville and finished by Berowne ("rest/jest", 53-54), a process which becomes systematic, so that Berowne's following long cue is entirely rhymed, as are almost all the lines spoken in the rest of the scene.

8 Shakespeare highlights these so-called scholars' inability to know themselves well enough to identify their own flaws by ironically having the King characterize in Armado the very flaw of self-infatuation demonstrated in the scene by the four men themselves:

> One who the music of his own vain tongue
> Doth ravish like enchanting harmony (I.i164-165)

The caricature of a soldier, trapped in the substance of words

9 Engaged in a pseudo-spiritual war in their academy, Navarre and his men differ only in degree but not in nature from the play's only professional soldier, Armado, whom Moth claims is also a "negligent student" in the art of love (III.i.29), just as Navarre and his men will be when they embark upon the wars of love in an ironic twist of fate which reveals how easily they pervert their ideals of knowledge and wisdom. If Moth's wittily mocking remarks are anything to go by, they seem to point out the extent to which his master tends to lose himself in the substance of words:

> jig off a tune at the tongue's end, canary it with your feet, humour it with turning up your eyelids, sigh a note and sing a note, sometime through the throat as if you swallowed love with singing love, sometime through the nose as if you snuffed love by smelling love (III.i.8-13)

10 What Moth underlines here is the extent to which Armado tends to lose himself in the substantiality, the materiality of words, a central preoccupation in the Renaissance[7]. In Rabelais' *Quart Livre*, the notion that words can be perceived by other senses than the ear is the crux of his version of the tale of frozen words. Like so many colourful ice-cubes, the various categories of words demonstrate that sound can be visible and palpable, just as in Moth's advice to his master, as the word "love" seems to be a material item that may be swallowed as well as snuffed and smelt. Later on in the scene when Moth's words "I will tell you sensibly" (98) sound like an echo of the same chapter in Rabelais ("the people saw the voices sensibly[8]"), the reference to the substantiality of words paves the way for Costard's inclination to *interpret* words sensibly, that is in a manner perceptible to the senses, and in his case as he is a farcical character, the lower senses.

11 While Armado seems unable to overcome his puzzlement at the apparent paradox of "a costard broken in a shin" (III.i.59) which he labels "an enigma, a riddle, Costard mishears his words, systematically mistaking them for the names of purgatives. Armado fails to interpret the word "costard" as other than a noun (a head), while Costard systematically hypostasizes words in a most literally-minded way[9]. And when Costard says he "*smells* some l'envoy" (105, emphasis mine), it seems he differs in degree but not in nature from Armado's pleasure in snuffing love.

12 The dialogue develops variations on the systematic corruption of words which culminate when the (subject) matter of the conversation becomes literal matter (pus) in Costard's reply to Armado

> ARMADO. We will talk no more of this matter.
> COSTARD. Till there be more matter in the shin (102-103)

13 as well as in Costard's scatological conclusion: "you will be my purgation and let me loose" (110-111). In both cases, the characters ground the words in their most literal sense, revealing that the corruption originates not in the words themselves so much as in the speakers' own tongues, a further exemplification of which is provided by Holofernes.

The progeny of a schoolmaster: Holofernes and his gift

14 Just as the only professional soldier in the play is a caricature, the only schoolteacher in the play displays most of the conventional characteristics satirized in English plays in the last quarter of the 16th century[10]. Holofernes seems to be one of the unlettered schoolmasters teaching young children the hornbook (V.i.40). He is also a parasite who takes advantage of his position to dine for free, even inviting Nathaniel to come along: "I do dine today at the father's of a certain pupil of mine" (IV.ii.135) "I will [...] undertake your *ben venuto*". Remarkably, after he has turned Nathaniel into another parasite, the latter seems to have acquired the schoolmaster's ability for synonymy (V.i. 2-7). Henceforward, there seems to be small differentiation between the two book-men.

15 In Holofernes' dialogue with Dull about the death of the deer, Dull's misinterpreting the Latin *haud credo* as "old grey doe" reenacts Costard's misunderstanding of Armado's foreign words in Act III, scene 1. The series of innuendoes that follows with Holofernes' "to insert against my haud credo for a deer" (IV.i.17) leading to Dull's explicit conclusion "the pollution holds in the exchange" (42) leads to the schoolmaster's monstrous piece of poetry on the death of the dear, so that thematically (with the series of allusions to sexuality) as well as structurally (with the proliferation of alliteration), the scene exemplifies the monstrous generative power of Holofernes' wordiness. The flaw is then explicitly exposed when the character gloats over his imagination using the metaphor of a womb: "These are begot in the ventricle of memory, nourished in the womb of pia mater, and delivered upon the mellowing of occasion" (IV.ii.61-63).

16 As Katharine Eisaman Maus has shown, many writers in the 16th and 17th centuries associated the creative imagination with the female body, and the Renaissance male appropriation of the womb as a figure for the imagination is consistent with the exclusion of women from literary endeavours[11]. The notion is burlesqued in Holofernes' boast, as the scene takes up themes similar to those of Act 3 scene 1: the sense of smell is used here as well in the reference to Ovid, associating the lower senses and hints about sexuality in the evocation of the poet's creative power: "for smelling out the odoriferous flowers of fancy, the jerks of invention" (IV.ii.111-112).

17 The two possible meanings of nourishment and new creation contained in the scene's closing word ("recreation", 145) recalls the two major flaws associated with the scholar in the play: excessive physical appetites, and a self-centered process of generation which symbolically replaces breeding and only results in the monstrous proliferation of words. No wonder then that with such a scholarly model, the kingdom of Navarre should be a place where love's labours are doomed to fail.

The women's use of language "to teach a teacher"

The Princess's performative use of rhyme

18 When the Princess and her ladies first appear onstage, they clearly feature as the female counterparts for Navarre and his men, yet they also differ from them in a number of ways. While Navarre proved unable to assert his authority and fell prey to the flattering tongues of his followers, the Princess' orders are diligently obeyed by

Boyet and she is also very lucid about his flattering words, taking an opportunity to teach him a lesson by means of a generalization, even though she only expresses the premise of her logical reasoning implicitly equating Boyet with the baseness of a chapman:

> Good Lord Boyet, my beauty, though but mean,
> Needs not the painted flourish of your praise.
> Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye,
> Not uttered by base sale of chapmen's tongues. (II.i.13-16)

19 The process is repeated just before Boyet's exit, with the added benefit of being this time a deductive reasoning (moving from the general to the specific), highlighting Boyet's flaw in a much more concise and direct way: "All pride is willing pride, and yours is so" (36). Remarkably, she uses a rhyme to do so (Boyet's previous line ends with "I go"), a process which looks very similar to the men's use of rhyme in act 1 scene 1, but with a radically different function: instead of starting a system of echoing lines as with the King (with "know" I.i.56, taken up by Berowne lines 61 and 68), the Princess' use of rhyme silences Boyet and gives her the upper hand, asserting her position as a figure of power, reinforcing her effective use of the regal "we": "Tell him the daughter of the King of France" (II.i.30). In the same scene a few lines later, she uses a rhyme to similarly silence the king himself (110-112). Taking things one step further, the recurrence of "know" (used by the men in similar circumstances) in the Princess' exchange with Maria may underline the gender difference. In the men's scene in Act I, scene 1, the repetition of "know" is an identical rhyme, in a series of statements insisting on the paradox of their so-called knowledge:

> BEROWNE. What is the end of study, let me know?
> KING. Why, that to know which else we would not know. (I.i.55-56)

20 But in Act II, scene 2, it is one of three rhyming words which mock the men and display the women's wit when Maria uses the word after the Princess's rhetorical question (a tool also used by Berowne):

> PRINCESS. Some merry mocking lord belike, is't so?
> MARIA. They say so that most his humours know.
> PRINCESS. Such short-lived wits do wither as they grow. (II.i.52-54)

21 More than a simple ornament of speech, rhyme is thus used as a tool for contrastive characterization between the four men and the four women, the former merely playing a game of identical echoes, while the latter put language and rhyme to their most effective use.

The women's ability to "bandy word for word[12]"

22 The encounter between the King and the Princess starts off as a refusal of the Princess to use verse and her questioning of the King's welcoming first line, together with a strong hint at his pride/hubris: "'Fair' I give you back again, and 'welcome' I have not yet" (II.i.91). In so doing, she demonstrates both her wit (punning on the signified of "this court", 92) and her social status and power ("too base to be mine", 93). When the King undertakes to teach her a lesson, she bandies word for word upon the central issue of knowledge around which Navarre's conversations with his men continually revolve and demonstrates her superiority through the use of logic, as she did with Boyet:

KING. Your ladyship is ignorant what is.
PRINCESS. Were my lord so, his ignorance were wise,
Where now his knowledge must prove ignorance. (101-102)

23 In Rosaline and Berowne's first exchange, Rosaline displays a similar ability to bandy word for word. Rosaline echoes no less than Berowne's entire line "Did I not dance with you in Brabant once?" (113-114), refusing to be subjected to his rhetorical question. The split lines the two characters share (115-116, 120) as well as their subsequent shared rhymes reveal the flirtatious quality of a dialogue where the woman has the upper hand and uses the man's words to dismiss him: "Amen, so you be none" (124), so that the women's demonstration of their skills in the scene seems to be a literal illustration of Berowne's words about study: "So study evermore is overshot" (I.i.140). Even when the proximity of the King and his men seems to allow their excessive taste for rhyme to contaminate their guests, as shown in the exchanges between Rosaline and Berowne (II.i.182-189), between Boyet and successively Dumaine (190-191), Longaville (193-204) and Berowne (205-210), it is to signal their impending exit. Boyet, who it seems has acquired their taste for rhyme, is defeated by the women's rhetorical skills when he concludes: "You are too hard for me" (255), not boding well for the four men when they return to face the ladies. Unlike *The Taming of the Shrew,* where rhetorical rivalry is mainly used in the first encounter-as-confrontation between Kate and Petruccio through the recurrence of stichomythia, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, rhetorical skills are used both to characterize individuals, and to characterize gendered identities. It seems that the more the four noblemen's speech mannerisms expand and spread to other men (as is the case with Boyet in Act II, scene 1), the more the women's superior abilities transpire as they are faced with powerless/impotent adversaries, as Boyet learns at his own expense.

Reversing the hierarchy: the hunt

24 Similar sexual overtones are developed with the scene of the hunt in Act IV, scene 1, which in turn will inspire Holofernes to produce his extempore poem on the death of the deer. Suggesting allusions to mythology with Diana and Actaeon as well as with Queen Elizabeth I's taste for the sport, the hunt is also consciously reversing traditional hierarchies by putting the ladies in the position of the killers. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Bianca playfully invites Petruccio to hunt her, putting herself in the role of the bird ("Am I your bird? I mean to shift my bush, / And then pursue me as you draw your bow", V.ii.47-48), and Tranio mocks Petruccio for failing to consummate his marriage using the hunting the deer metaphor: "'Tis thought your deer does hold you at bay", V.ii.57). In both instances the hunter is male and the prey female.

25 In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the role of the hunter occupied by the Princess show the extent of her power: she does not shy from using real weapons and killing the deer, however vain the activity may be, as she herself acknowledges: "As I for praise alone now seek to spill / The poor deer's blood, that my heart means no ill." (IV.i.33-34). It may also be meant as a tool for contrastive characterization: like Navarre in the first scene of the play, she admits she seeks fame, but unlike him, she is fully aware of her own limitations. Her 14-line long rhymed speech functions as an acknowledgement of her flaws showing her self-knowledge and confessing her defects. Despite an apparent formal resemblance with similar speeches by Berowne or the King, her lines have a radically different

purpose: while the men's use of rhymed poetry is characteristic of their self-infatuation, her speech points out all the things she blames herself for in agreeing to "play the murderer" (8).

26 The game also reflects the nature of occupations at the court of Navarre and "its tendencies towards narcissism and aggression[13]" so that "hunting, in short, carries the aggressive tendencies of the play's courtly games to a disturbing extreme, suggesting that behind the joke may lie a desire to kill[14]." A literal weapon put in the Princess' hand will not be "overshot". As she has no choice but to play Navarre's games, in the hunt as in conversation, her arrows never fail to reach their targets, or as Berry puts it, "[s]he kills the deer with a literal arrow and the King with a metaphoric one[15]."

27 Here again, as in Act II, scene 1, Boyet is used as a sort of substitute for Navarre and his three companions in the exchanges with Rosaline and Maria at the end of the scene, so that while the Princess is literally hunting the deer, the two ladies are playing the metaphorical hunting game, the erotic game, with Boyet in the role of the willing prey. As he presumably asks both ladies the same question (hence its repetition "Who's the shooter? Who's the shooter?", IV.i.101) putting in relief the reversal of roles in the love-game with the paronomastic pun on "suitor", Boyet finds himself in the position of a pupil, while Rosaline is the teacher ("Shall I teach you now?", 101). A series of gradually more explicit sexual jokes follows, culminating in the "hit it" references and the song which acts as Rosaline's exit cue, after which she is replaced by Maria and the game repeats itself, reaching new lows in terms of explicitness as Costard intervenes, acting as Boyet's partner. The move is towards more and more literally-minded utterances including masturbation and ejaculation, as Maria notes: "Come, come, you talk greasily, your lips grow foul" (130). The exchange ends on Costard's echo of Boyet's statement of defeat in Act II, scene 1: "She's too hard for you at pricks, sir. Challenge her to bowl" (131), prompting Boyet's erotic reply: "I fear too much rubbing" (132). As Stephen Greenblatt has shown[16], friction for Shakespeare is specifically associated with verbal wit, and Boyet is no match for any of the ladies in the game, a possible hint at the ladies' superior erotic knowledge and certainly superior sexual appetite, as Berowne had already noted about Rosaline in his soliloquy in Act 3:

> Ay, and by heaven, one that will do the deed
> Though Argus were her eunuch and her guard (III.i.175-176)

The lessons of the comedy: the women's manner

28 As Margreta de Grazia has pointed out, much has been made of the linguistic excesses so characteristic of *Love's Labour's Lost* and many links have been established with 20th century linguistic theory. However, as she demonstrates, when re-historicizing linguistic perception in the context of the late 16th century, it appears that language is deemed competent if the speaker's will is correct[17]. In such a perspective, the corruption of language lies in the nature of the *person* using it rather than in the *medium* itself. By putting the issue of study and learning in such a central place and by the women's apt use of language and the men's vanity, it seems the play demonstrates the problem lies with the male characters' corruption, not with language itself.

Preposterous developments

29 The kingdom of Navarre, placed in the opening scene under the guiding principles of spiritual warfare and study, is peopled by figures who should by profession exemplify these virtues: the curate, the scholar and the soldier. In other words, while the expected hierarchies between the sexes are reversed and the women are turned into the men's teachers, the male figures who should exemplify the virtuous ideals professed by Navarre turn out to be satirical and comical distortions of the very principles they – as Navarre – claim to embody. Perhaps this is precisely where the rub originates: in their bodies and in their appetites.

30 Moth denounces both Holofernes and Nathaniel as parasites in a metaphor which insists upon the materiality of words conceived as palatable, just as the word "love" for Armado was palpable and could be swallowed or snuffed: "They have been at a great feast of languages and stolen the scraps" (V.i.32), and proceeds to put Holofernes' knowledge to the test by asking him to spell backwards, one in the many references to preposterousness[18] which echoes Nathaniel's praise of Holofernes' tutoring of boys (IV.ii.66). Moth's display of wit, praised equally by Costard and Armado, seems to inspire both and the verbal pyrotechnics that follows sinks lower and lower into scatology, starting with Costard's false Latin "*ad dunghill*" (V.i.64) which makes a lot of sense in its apparent nonsense. Holofernes' reaction is expressed using the sense of smell, giving even more vividness to the reference to excrement, and Armado's words sustain and develop the image: "arts-man, perambulate" (65). The next Latin word, "mons", is the occasion of a direct reference to Holofernes' teaching methods with boys in a school termed "charge-house" and it seems Armado's idea about the exact nature of the education Holofernes delivers contaminates Holofernes' speech to the extent that he coins the phrase "the posteriors of this day" (72), immediately taken up by the pedant, who deems it "well culled", which puns on the French *cul*-led. In Armado's confidences about his relationship with Navarre, as the phrase "let it pass" recurs (78-79, 81, 87) it seems Armado is revealing an intimacy ("what is inward between us", 78) which sheds a new light on the uses Navarre meant to have for Armado ("I will use him for my minstrelsy", I.i.174). The playful amorous caresses the verb "dally" refers to would be enough in themselves to hint at the sexual nature of the relationship, but the concatenation of signifiers culminates in the gesture that accompanies the scatological reference: "with his royal finger *thus* to dally with my excrement" (V.i.82-83, emphasis mine). The "certain special honours" (85-86) that Navarre imparts to Armado are one more flaw defining the reasons for the sterility of the all-male world of his academy.

Staging a confrontation

31 As Boyet warns the Princess of the impending arrival of the four men by using the metaphor of love as warfare, the Princess' response underlines the dichotomy between the men's false idol, Cupid, and the French women's true patron saint: "Saint Denis to Saint Cupid!" (V.ii.87). In the conversation that follows, as she learns what the men mean to do and what arms they are using, those of a disguise, she proves her ability to respond by using the same weapon in a more clever way: "we will everyone be masked" (127) and use their favours as outward signs of identification: "So shall Berowne take me for Rosaline" (133). By using the men's own tools better, the Princess means to

teach them a lesson, shown in the parallel construction: "mock for mock" (140), "sport by sport o'erthrown" (153), winning the metaphoric battle by keeping her ground: "So shall we stay, mocking intended game/And they, well mocked, depart away with shame" (155-156). As the men who think their disguise is a clever trick are in a position of constant dramatic irony, the structure of the play emphasizes their weaknesses and the women's strength.

32 Remarkably, this pseudo battle between the sexes takes the form of a lesson in reckoning, as Rosaline (pretending to be the Princess) asks the men who claim to have walked many miles to come to them, how many inches are in one mile (v.ii.188-189). As Berowne answers with a compliment to evade the question, Rosaline asks again (195-197) and he evades answering again, proving he is no better at reckoning than Armado was with Moth. All this while, the King has remained silent, likewise proving his ignorance in the matter. As he and Rosaline in disguise converse apart, the Princess in disguise and Berowne have a conversation in which she mocks him by teaching him to count, showing him she is fully aware of the flattery in his words: "Honey, milk and sugar: there is three" (231).

33 The confrontation ends with Boyet's moralization, stating the women's victory by taking up warfare imagery and underlining what makes the women such fierce adversaries: unlike the men whose words are literally-oriented and linked to bodily needs and functions, the women's language is "[a]bove the sense of sense" (v.ii.259). When the ladies and the lords meet again, the Princess' reply to the King sound like an echo of their very first encounter, as she gives his words of greeting back to him again " 'Fair' in 'all hail' is foul, as I conceive" (340), a lesson indicating that he fails to adequately differentiate between evil and virtue. This is taken up a few lines further: "You nickname virtue: 'vice' you should have spoke" (349).

34 The theme of virtue runs through the scene, and Dumaine seems to be the first to see sense: "Let us confess and turn it into a jest" (v.ii.390), while Berowne cannot help falling back into his old rhetorical ways, as his speech of defeat and renunciation proves he is doing the opposite of what he says: as he claims to be renouncing poetry and its flourishes, the form and the abundance of figures he uses to signify this show he is wallowing in it, not giving it up. The recurrence of foreign (French) words at the end of his speech gives an opportunity to Rosaline to nail down the lesson, as she rebukes Berowne: "*sans* 'sans' I pray you" (416) which is probably best pronounced as "*sans sens(e)*".

The virtue of laughter

35 While Navarre's ambition was to reach fame by setting up a model academy based on the principles of spiritual warfare and study, his kingdom turns out to be a place of profound corruption where men's thoughts and inclinations prove baser and baser as the play unfolds, and where the figures who are supposed to represent the professed ideals of noble warfare, religious virtue and scholarly knowledge appear to be grotesque or satirical caricatures. The noble principles voiced by Navarre in the opening scene hardly hold once the Princess and her ladies have arrived, and the women prove more apt than the men in all the fields they had professed to study, as well as in the rhetorical warfare that takes place between the sexes on the battlefield of make-believe, stage-like performance. Armed with masks and favours, the ladies defeat

the men at their own game, outdoing them and teaching them a scathing lesson which makes the Princess' words in Act II, scene 1 come true, as she indeed has taught a teacher a lesson in the art of poetry, courtship and acting. What may seem frivolous at first is in fact a means to reach the virtuous goal professed at the beginning of the play and that Navarre – were it not for the Princess' intervention – would have been unable to achieve: the path to virtue is through self-knowledge and the admission of one's own flaws. As Dumaine resolves to confess and the Princess invites the King to do so ("The fairest is confession", V.ii.432), it becomes obvious that the part played by the women includes not only the function of teacher but also that of a spiritual guide.

36 After the entertaining interim of the Pageant of the Nine Worthies and the intrusion of death with the message delivered by Marcadé, it seems that note is the predominant one, as the former Princess, now Queen of France, imposes upon Navarre a one-year penance, a fate similar to her own process of mourning which also ironically will make him literally follow the strict principles of his edict in Act I. A similar twelve-month penance is given to Berowne by Rosaline, taking up the theme of acting and the function of laughter, that is putting Berowne's rhetorical talent to the test by making his jokes into a sort of medicine able to alleviate the sufferings of the sick and the dying. Such emphasis on humour, the main fuel of comedy, posits the genre itself and not simply Berowne's wit, as a power able to rival with the agony of sickness and the fear of death:

> ROSALINE. You shall this twelvemonth term from day to day
> Visit the speechless sick and still converse
> With groaning wretches; and your task shall be
> With all the fierce endeavor of your wit
> To enforce the pained impotent to smile. (V.ii.818-822)

37 The scene displays an increasingly tragic inclination with the reference to the death of Katharine's unnamed sister that opens the scene (12-13), the *memento mori* glimpsed at when the lords mock Holofernes' appearance in the pageant and offer several interpretations for it, among which "A death's face in a ring" (598), and Marcadé's announcement of the death of the King of France. Yet the penance chosen by Rosaline for Berowne intimates the possible existence of a counterpoint to the darkness of death, in the proper use of jests, to "move wild laughter in the throat of death" (823). In so doing, laughter is endowed with two types of virtues: the power to relieve the pains of the hearers' sufferings (a curative power already put in relief in the induction of *The Taming of the Shrew*, where Sly is willing to hear the play prescribed by his doctors for its curative powers[19]) if Berowne succeeds, and therefore reforms himself by putting his talent in the selfless service of others; or undergo the alternative type of self-reformation that Rosaline suggest, by giving up on his scorns entirely:

> ROSALINE. But if they will not, throw away that spirit,
> And I shall find you empty of that fault,
> Right joyful of your reformation. (V.ii.855-857)

*

38 Bidding farewell to the lords in disguise, the Princess called them "my frozen Muscovites" (V.ii.265). In a play where references to the materiality of words are numerous and where potential echoes of the tale of the frozen words can be found, it is tempting to see the appellation as more than a coincidence. In a kingdom where the

idolization of words reaches such extremes that reading comes to be defined as a pseudo-Eucharist by the man of the cloth (Nathaniel saying about Dull "He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink.", IV.ii.22), and where words, either on paper or delivered by so-called Muscovites, fail so spectacularly to reach their proper targets, it seems in so calling Navarre and his men that the Princess makes clear where their chief flaw resides: in their misplaced use of language. Remarkably, it is the male characters who are affected with something akin to verbal incontinence in the play, and not the women, and even more specifically with an excessive taste for foreign words, which at the time was taken as a sign of social disease for the kingdom[20]. As the men are prescribed a potential cure for this ailment, Rosaline's generalization significantly puts the value of a jest in the listener's ear, which in turn invites the play's hearers to reflect upon their own importance in the working of the comedy. The gaping ending, "not like an old comedy", leaves the outcome of the love-plot entirely in the hands of the audience (a tool that Shakespeare later develops with a direct address to the audience in the epilogue of *The Tempest*) while the lessons learnt by the men put the emphasis on the cathartic potential of comedy as a counterpoint to suffering and death, so that the lesson at work is ultimately one in the art of hearing, and in the art of hearing a comedy.

NOTES

1. Ursula Potter, "Pedagogy and Parenting in English Drama 1560-1610. Flogging Schoolmasters and Cockering Mothers", unpublished thesis, University of Sydney, 2001, available online http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au//bitstream/2123/356/2/adt-NU20010717.111842whole02.pdf.

2. Cynthia Lewis, "'We know what we know' : Reckoning in *Love's Labour's Lost*", *Studies in Philology*, vol. 105, number 2, Spring 2008, p. 245-264, p. 260.

3. Delphine Lemonnier-Texier, "Parole vive et école de la comédie dans *Love's Labour's Lost*" in D. Lemonnier-Texier and G. Winter, ed., *Lectures de* Love's Labour's Lost *de William Shakespeare*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2014, p. 7-14.

4. Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, p. 3.

5. Patricia Parker, *Shakespeare from the Margins. Language, Culture, Context*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, chapter 1 "Preposterous Estates, Preposterous Events. From Late to Early Shakespeare", p. 20-55.

6. Rolf Soellner, *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge*, Ohio State University Press, 1972, chapter 5, p. 83.

7. Judith H. Anderson, *Words that Matter. Linguistic Perception in Renaissance English*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1996, in particular p. 8-9.

8. *Ibid.,* p. 12.

9. Keir Elam, *Shakespeare's Universe of Discourse. Language-games in the Comedies*, Cambridge, CUP, 1984, p. 120.

10. Potter, *op. cit.*

11. Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 193.

12. William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew* (v.ii.178), B. Hodgdon, ed., London, Methuen, 2010.
13. Edward Berry, *Shakespeare and the Hunt. A Cultural and Social Study*, Cambridge, CUP, 2001, p. 60.
14. *Ibid*., p. 61.
15. *Ibid*., p. 67.
16. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, p. 89-90.
17. Margreta de Grazia, "Shakespeare's View of Language: an Historical Perspective", in Vivian Salmon and Edwina Burness, ed., *A Reader in the Language of Shakespearean Drama*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1987, p. 473-488.
18. Parker,*op. cit.*, p. 30-32.
19. "Therefore they [your doctors] thought it good you hear a play
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life." (Induction 2.130-132).
20. Diane Cady, "Linguistic Dis-Ease: Foreign Language as Sexual Disease in Early Modern England", in Kevin Siena, ed., *Sins of the Flesh. Responding to Sexual Disease in Early Modern Europe*, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2005, p. 159-186, p. 160-161.

ABSTRACTS

The thematisation of the process of teaching and learning in *Love's Labour's Lost* is used as a tool of contrastive characterization to show how the male characters professing ideals of virtue and knowledge are those least able to enforce them. Ironically, the key to their redemption lies precisely in those whose company they banish, i.e. women. As the play develops and the women are shown as able to use the men's own rhetorical weapons much more effectively than they are, the satirical vein of the play grows into an effective denunciation of the flaws of Navarre which, together with the strongly metatheatrical last act, culminates in a lesson on the cathartic potential of comedy.

La thématisation du processus d'enseignement et d'apprentissage dans *Love's Labour's Lost* est utilisée comme outil de caractérisation contrastive pour montrer comment les personnages masculins sont les moins aptes à mettre en œuvre et faire advenir les principes de vertu et de savoir qu'ils professent. La clé de leur rédemption est, de manière ironique, détenue précisément par celles dont ils ont banni la présence, à savoir les personnages féminins. Au fil de la pièce, alors que les femmes s'avèrent capables d'utiliser bien plus efficacement que les hommes les armes rhétoriques de ces derniers, la veine satirique de la pièce s'accroît et donne lieu à la dénonciation des failles de Navarre, ce qui, ajouté à la dimension très métathéâtrale du cinquième acte, amène au point culminant : une leçon sur le potentiel cathartique de la comédie.

INDEX

Keywords: teaching, learning, characterization, women, men, comedy, catharsis, Love’s Labour’s Lost
Mots-clés: enseignement, apprentissage, caractérisation, hommes, femmes, comédie, catharsis, Peines d’amour perdues

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